



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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January 12, 2005

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members
FROM: Tom Locke, Board Chair
RE: **PUBLIC HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

Background and Summary

The 1993 Health Services Act recognized the importance of a public health system having adequate capacity to carry out its essential functions. RCW 43.70.520 states, "The legislature finds that the public health functions of community assessment, policy development, and assurance of service delivery are essential elements in achieving the objectives of health reform in Washington State." It required the Department of Health (DOH) to lead a collaborative effort to produce a Public Health Improvement Plan in 1994, which was to define minimum standards, recommend strategies for improvement, and recommend a level of dedicated funding.

Although the Legislature rolled back much of the Health Services Act, it liked the Public Health Improvement Plan. Legislation enacted in 1995 requires DOH to update the plan at the start of each biennium. The 2004 iteration is due back from the printer shortly. Copies of the executive summary are attached. The Board is an active member of the Public Health Improvement Partnership (PHIP), which produces the plan. Other partners are DOH, the Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials (WSALPHO), the Washington Health Foundation, and the UW's Northwest Center for Public Health Practice. The Board is on the Steering Committee and Board members and staffers participate on the Communications, Access, Finance and Standards committees.

Each biennium, the PHIP develops and executes a work plan. The plan then captures the results. That work often has a bearing on the Board's activities. For example, the Board supports stable and secure funding for public health, but just how much funding is necessary? The PHIP has established a set of standards for public health in Washington, and this biennium it set out to determine just how much money the public health system would need to meet those standards 95 percent of the time.

I have invited three people to brief the Board on the PHIP work plan for the biennium, the products of the work plan, and the prospects for future work. Participating are Joan Brewster, DOH Director of Public Health Systems Planning and Development, Dr. Larry Jecha, Benton-Franklin Health Officer and Steering Committee co-chair, and Torney Smith, Spokane Regional Health District Administrator and Standards Committee co-chair.

Recommended Board Action

None